

BRENDA COOKE PRATT

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Brenda Cooke Pratt

(1924 - )

Mrs. Pratt is the great-granddaughter of two very prominent Island missionary families: the Amos Starr Cookes and the William H. Rices, both on her father's side. On her mother's side of the family, she is the great-granddaughter of Charles John Wall who was brought to Hawaii as one of the architects for Iolani Palace. Her parents are Thomas Atherton and Muriel Howatt Cooke.

In this interview, Mrs. Pratt recounts her family history and the role of the missionaries in Hawaii as well as their relationship with royalty. She also tells of her paternal grandmother, Anna Charlotte Rice Cooke, from whose art collection the Honolulu Academy of Arts was born.

Lynda Mair, Interviewer

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INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA COOKE PRATT

(MRS. JOHN SCOTT BOYD PRATT, III)

At her Waikiki home, 2979 Kalakaua Avenue, Honolulu 96815

October 27, 1971

P: Brenda Cooke Pratt

M: Lynda Mair, Interviewer

P: The missionary side is easy enough, but I got to thinking about this and I think what is of equal interest is on my mother's side. I'll do the genealogy. Her name was Muriel Elizabeth [Wall] Howatt [1891-1969]. That's H-O-W-A-T-T. Her father married Emily [Adelaide] Wall and Emily Wall's father was Charles [John] Wall, who was brought to Hawaii as one of the architects of Iolani Palace, which is interesting because this is the non-missionary side. He was an Irishman. I've never been able to trace him-- Charles Wall. He evidently left Ireland with a purpose and I don't know how he got out here. I think I can trace him as far back as California, but that's about it.

M: So he got out here about what--1850, '60? [He was married in England in 1854.]

P: Yes, I'd say so. The palace wasn't built until what--1880? [Iolani Palace was completed in 1882; it was started in 1879.]

M: Um hm.

P: That's easy enough to verify.

M: Yeh.

P: He brought his wife and--now here we'll have to check numbers but it doesn't matter--there were two daughters and I think six [seven] sons and they were all over six feet tall and they all had red hair. They were the friends of the part-Hawaiians--the Wards and people like that--so they got into the social angle of Honolulu, as opposed to the missionaries who stayed a little bit aloof from it, except for Dr. [Gerrit P.] Judd who managed to bridge the

gap in that way.

During the Revolution [of 1893] that took place, the men were all sharpshooters--the sons--but nobody would shoot them because they were so tall and so distinguished with their red hair. (laughter) They got off scot-free.

M: Which side were they on?

P: Oh, they were against the monarchy. That was it, yeh.

M: They were against the monarchy, so they were on the American side.

P: They were on the American side. Oh yes, they were Americans by that time.

M: Uh huh.

P: And that is why I'm an Episcopalian. You see, they were not the Congregationalists; they were the foreign element, as it were, although they were Americans.

One of them was noted for his cocktail parties. They'd just invented cocktails at that point (laughs), so you see that was totally un-missionary. There was also a divorce in that family which was very unusual.

M: Uh huh.

P: Both my mother and my father were in the same class at Punahou [School]; grew up together.

M: Let me go back now and get this straight. Mr. Wall was the architect.

P: Yeh, Charles Wall.

M: He came over with his wife and this large family.

P: That's right.

M: And Charles Wall is your maternal . . .

P: Great-grandfather.

M: Great-grandfather.

P: Yeh.

M: So your mother is the daughter of one of those sons.

P: Was the daughter of one of the daughters.

M: Of the daughters.

P: Let's see. Charles Wall's daughter was Emily Adelaide Wall [1860-1943].

M: Is that Emily with an I-E?

P: No--Y. Not French; English. E-M-I-L-Y.

M: Okay.

P: Adelaide dates her as does Queen Victoria's [name].

M: And that was your . . .

P: That was my maternal grandmother. And my mother's name was Muriel Elizabeth Wall Howatt.

M: Okay.

P: Now the Howatt is of the Scottish side. They were the names we traced back a little bit farther because his [James Pope Howatt's] great-grandparents [the James Howatts of Lockerbie, Scotland] came to Prince Edward Island [a province of Canada]. Oh, his father was born in Norfolk, England--my great-grandfather's father [the Honorable Cornelius Howatt's father]. The reason why they left Scotland: he [Cornelius Howatt] eloped with an heiress, whose name was Jane Bell, and he had to get out because she was of a higher station. He married her and she was of a higher station than he was so he cleared out, literally, and went to Prince Edward Island.

How he [James Pope Howatt] met my grandmother, I don't know, but they met in California. What they were doing in California, I don't know, but my mother herself was born in Eureka, California and came down [to Hawaii] at the age of three.

There's a crossing back and forth. I think what people don't realize is that--they think that the missionaries came out; that these people came out. They don't realize that they went back and forth so many times. It's the same thing with the Pilgrim Fathers. You know, they made many trips back and forth, which people don't realize. So that is as nearly as far back as I can go.

My Grandfather Howatt was a Scottish--oh golly, he was one who claimed that his father was one of Bobby Burns' [Robert Burns, 1759-1796, famed Scottish poet] best friends, you know, because Bobby Burns did not have a voice and so Bobby Burns would take his poems to my great-grandfather to sing because he did have a voice. And of course, the Low Caledon phrase and Lockerbie are very

close together. And he never did a day's work in his life. He could drink anybody under the table. Tradition is very strong there. (chuckles) The education was a very good one; it was very sound classically. He knew all of that very well.

M: And you were acquainted with your Grandfather Howatt.

P: As I say, I was a captive audience. They lived right next door to us up Nuuanu where I was born and I had to go and visit them once a day.

M: Oh really?

P: Oh yes! (Lynda laughs) My grandmother, at that point, still had red hair and she was quite talented in a crafty way. She could paint and she could sew beautifully. Oh, I remember baby bonnets that she made and dolls' clothes; and she painted china and she painted paintings and we have one. She was very gifted with her hands but then she was struck with arthritis when she was about thirty or forty and from there on she just gradually. . . . She could still move but when I knew her, when I was fifteen or so, she was almost completely bedridden--completely crippled by arthritis--which was a tragedy because what she wanted to do she could no longer do. And they only had the one child; that was my mother.

But my grandfather used to talk. He told me all about Scotland and all of the so-called family history and about the ancestor who fought in the Battle of Waterloo. He was an officer but was so poor that they would clip off the gold fringe of the epaulets, which was really truly gold bullion or whatever they call it, and sell it, you see, to live. Now this is where Scott says I romanticize, but I remember these stories.

M: Uh huh.

P: And whether they're true or not, I'm sure that they are part of the type of story that was told then, and whether they're attached to the family--whether he attached them or whether they really happened, I don't know for certain.

M: Was your grandfather--what was he employed doing here in Honolulu?

P: He was a clerk at Lewers & Cooke, [Inc.].

M: Hmm.

P: He did not have a business ability.

M: Um hmm.

P: You mean my Grandfather Howatt?

M: Yeh. Let's see now.

P: You see, he left whatever job he had. Now this is where I'm uncertain.

M: He left California and came here.

P: He left California and came here. My grandmother, with her dressmaking ability--as a seamstress she was very remarkable--she helped send her brothers through college.. She was the one who had the oomph to support the family. She had the drive; he did not. He was too much of a gentleman's son. He did not have that kind of a character. He was very gentle and, as I say, he had the education but he lacked the drive.

M: Uh huh, but they were prosperous enough.

P: Oh yes. Oh, everybody was prosperous. I mean, if you were a haole, well, there was every means at hand to be prosperous. Everybody had servants, you know.

M: Um hmm.

P: They were able to the extent that they could afford to send her to Punahou.

M: Your mother?

P: Yes. She was very bright, although neither she nor my father went to college. It wasn't considered necessary then, certainly not for a woman. That was very unusual.

M: Yeh, right. What year would your mother have graduated?

P: Let's see, they were married in [1914]. She was twenty-two.

M: Nineteen ten or 1912?

P: Nineteen ten [1910]. It was one of those outstanding years. I think it was 1910. I can check that. [1910 is correct.]

M: Let me check to see if this. . . . (recorder turned off and on again) Yeh, why don't you say something now and we'll see how it comes out.

- P: What do you want--ABC, ABC, ABC?
- M: That's fine. (recorder turned off and on again) I've got to clean the heads on that (recorder). That's one of the problems. There.
- P: It (the microphone) doesn't bother me. The only time I was ever bothered by anything like that was when I did a thing with Pug Atherton and it was a real honest-to-God mike. I said to Pug, "You know, I cannot understand it but I'm just breaking out in a sweat" and he laughed and laughed. (laughter) I was so used to talking to people but it was really that mike fright. [Alexander S. Atherton]
- M: Yeh.
- P: But this thing is so innocuous that it doesn't.
- M: You forget all about it.
- P: Yes. You see, and looking at you I can't even see it now.
- M: Yeh, right. Let's see, where were we? We were talking about your . . .
- P: I'm hop, skipping and jumping too much.
- M: That's okay. I can put it together usually, and then I could always call you, you know, if I need to.
- P: Oh yes. I can look up dates for you too if you want.
- M: That kind of helps.
- P: It does.
- M: Even, you know, circa so-and-so.
- P: Yes, um hmm.
- M: Just to kind of get a chronological order together. Let's see, why don't you go ahead and tell me more about these maternal grandparents that you were . . .
- P: Let me think for a minute. Let's see, I've done Lockerbie, which is the beginning, and I can't go any further back than that. I think it's only about four generations but they're unimportant; it's just names.
- M: Um hmm.



P: And speaking of large families, they had sixteen to a family and twelve to a family and, oh glory, the names that went into those were quite fantastic. And then they went down to Prince Edward Island and, as I say, to California. I wish I could be clearer on that but I just can't. There's too much to-and-fro-ing.

M: Uh huh.

P: One thing that you can't put into your [transcript], I suppose, but I do think as a human interest story it's delightful. It's that my maternal grandmother, Miss Emily Adelaide Wall, was an old maid and when she was married in California--I kept her wedding license and finally tore it up after everybody was dead, but on it my grandfather's age is age thirty--James Pope Coleridge--and she put her age down as thirty and I know as a fact she was five years older. (laughter) Imagine having that kind of pride that you're not going to admit that you're five years older than your husband. But it's there in the vital statistics. [They were married on June 3, 1890.]

M: So she was, I guess, considered an old maid . . .

P: Yes, she was.

M: . . . in those days, at thirty-five.

P: She probably didn't marry because she wasn't pretty in the conventional sense. She was a striking woman. Red hair at that point was not popular anyway and she had brown eyes and red hair and she was very different. She was probably too smart--you know what I mean?--and so she ended up marrying someone whom she could mother more and he probably was looking for someone who would mother him. It makes sense after all.

M: She was the one you say had the marvelous push and creative talent.

P: Yes. Yes. Um hmm.

M: Your grandfather's name is James Pope Coleridge--as in the poet--Howatt.

P: Um hmm. And they called him Pope.

M: Oh really?

P: Yes. (laughter)

M: Pope Howatt! (laughter)

P: Anybody who will not stand up and defend himself with a name like that! You get a pretty good . . .

M: You mean friends and so forth commonly called him Pope?

P: Yes. Yes. I remember hearing him referred to as Uncle Pope.

M: Oh for heaven's sake. (laughs)

P: I don't know whether I thought they were being funny or what. (laughter)

Oh--Brenda. This is just a pure sidelight, but I wasn't christened until I was three and then I remember my christening vividly because for three years my mother, who had a very strong will, fought with my grandmother over what I was to be called. My grandmother insisted that I be named after this illustrious relative, ancestress Jane Bell, who was the lady. My mother said, no, I was to be called Brenda because she'd found it in Sir Walter Scott's [novel] The Pirate. And they argued it until I was three years old, but I attended my own christening very much there. (laughter)

M: And this was in the Episcopal Church? Was that Saint Andrew's [Cathedral]?

P: Well no, it wasn't. Well, it would have been except that in the family tradition I was christened up at my grandparents' house.

M: Oh.

P: That was sort of the Old English business; also, it's the Early American too. You didn't get married in church; you got married at home. You were christened at home. I think it goes with the family hearth idea, but you find it again and again and again.

M: Yeh.

P: So I guess I was just a holdover from all that.

M: This was at your maternal grandparents' house.

P: Um hmm, um hmm.

M: Were they closer sort of to you as a child growing up than your father's parents?

- P: No. My father's father I never knew--Charles Montague Cooke--because he died when he was in his fifties and that was 1909. There's a date for you. That was before my father was even married. But my grandmother [Anna Charlotte Rice Cooke] I do remember very, very well.
- M: And she's the one that lived in that big house up on Manoa Road?
- P: No. Do you know where the so-called Spalding House is now for the Academy of Arts--Makiki Heights? [2411 Makiki Heights Drive]
- M: Yeh.
- P: That was her home. She built that after my grandfather died, but before that they lived where the Honolulu Academy of Arts is situated now on Beretania [Street], across from Thomas Square. I'm adding the information for the benefit of the little (recording) machine. That's where they lived, and then . . .
- M: But not in the building that's there now.
- P: No, that building was built in 1927 and her home, I think, up Makiki Heights was built either 1927 or '26, but just before the present academy building was built.
- M: I see.
- P: It goes back that far only.
- M: Then where did your parents live?
- P: Well, my parents when they were married, they rented in Manoa. And then they built during the war--the First World War--a house up in Nuuanu on the corner of Country Club Road and Nuuanu. It was the highest up house at that date--highest up the valley, that is, towards the Pali--except for the summer home that belonged to my grandparents, which was at Luakaha which was way up.
- M: Yeh.
- P: As a permanent residence. The Oahu Country Club was built about the same time as my parents' house. That's 1914. As a matter of fact, there is one lovely complication because the driveway into my parents' house was absolutely straight and nobody could ever understand it till they discovered that they had swapped with the Oahu Country Club and we owned Country Club Road. (laughter) This we

found out back in 1940-something. All these years, we owned Country Club Road and they had owned our driveway. (laughter) I wanted them to make up a sort of a toll bridge but Page Anderson, who was born right across the street there, said, "No, no. There are too many legal difficulties. If somebody breaks a leg, I think you'll be sued."

M: Yeh.

P: He always took the fun out of life. (laughter)

M: So is that house on Nuuanu then where you actually grew up?

P: Yes, and I was actually born in that house, as was my sister before me.

M: And the [James Pope Coleridge] Howatts lived right next door?

P: Right next door.

M: Did they build the two houses at the same time?

P: My mother had it built for them.

M: I see.

P: Her father's little house. It now belongs to the Academy of Arts and Marvel Hart is living in it. She's, of course, with the academy.

M: Oh.

P: Charming little place. It's right next to the golf course so it was just a very short walk there, but I used to see my Grandmother Cooke about, oh, once a week. She died when I was ten. That's 1934. I don't mind giving my age. Oh, you live in it. If you're born in a fishbowl like Honolulu, people are apt to come up to you and say, "Oh, I remember when you were born. That was in so-and-so."

M: Yeh, right. (chuckles)

P: Right out loud too. Grandma used to come about once a week to visit us and take us for a ride, things like that.

M: Uh huh. And you were an only child.

P: No, I said I was brought up as an only child. I had three

older sisters and they were born bing-bing-bing, and then six years later--me.

M: Oh yeh, gotcha.

P: Like my sons, I'm apt to speak too rapidly, as words get lost.

Actually, the site where I was born on the corner of Country Club Road and Nuuanu is now the Nichiren Mission Hall, and that was five acres and it's now all completely subdivided. Beautiful garden, gorgeous garden. It was very nice but the house was hideous from the outside. It was one of these great big rambling things, you know.

M: That was the style when it was built.

P: Oh yes, uh huh. Stucco and all the rest. It was painted a mustard yellow and it had a red roof, if you can believe it, in the very beginning and then they finally reshaped it up (chuckles) so it was a little bit better. It was large.

M: Uh huh.

P: That was in the days when people had attics. I'm just as glad they don't anymore because not to have an attic is a good thing.

M: Was your Grandmother Cooke still very much in the missionary sort of--so far as her attitudes and . . .

P: Ah, no. Actually, when I knew her she was more Chinese than she was missionary. She had a very strong family feeling and her house certainly was in the Chinese style.

M: How do you mean that?

P: Oh, a dark interior. By that I mean actually stained black walls. And then sort of--if I use the word fretwork I don't know if that gives the right impression; I could do it so much better with my hands--in the windows, geometric windows painted green and red. All Oriental furniture. By Oriental I mean Chinese teakwood furniture and Chinese rugs.

M: Hmm.

P: She was a tremendous collector. As I say, she had twenty-nine grandchildren. Just to give you an idea how she collected, I must have been about eight and my Swiss governess took me up to her house and she had a calabash with

numbers on pieces of paper [in it]. All of us grandchildren were there, twenty-nine of them, and we were each allowed to choose two numbers. And then we matched those two pieces of paper, each number, up with a separate rug that had the same number on it. So we each went home with two Oriental rugs.

M: (laughs) Oh!

P: And double twenty-nine is fifty-eight. That's fifty-eight extra Oriental rugs! (laughs)

M: Is that where you got these?

P: Oh no, no. Scott bought these. No, I don't know what happened to mine; they disappeared. After all, you get something when you're eight and, you know, sometimes you have it laying around; sometimes you don't.

M: Yeh. Did she start this collecting way back, then?

P: Yes, I think she started shortly after she was married and then, of course, they were fortunate. They lived in the times before the income tax. Income tax came in 1913. I have that date from Scott. And so they were fortunate. My grandfather piled up money and she had good taste and she liked to collect things, and she did--sets of china, silver, glassware. Sort of compulsive, but she gave away too. She was very generous.

M: Uh huh, uh huh. And these things are partly up there now in the [Spalding House].

P: Well, when the academy was started in 1927 she gave the larger part of her art collection to the Honolulu Academy of Arts.

M: At that time.

P: Yes, at that time, and that was the nucleus of that collection. But since then a lot of it was discovered to be second-, third-rate, fourth-rate stuff and that has been gotten rid of and the good stuff has been retained and they've just added on to the collection.

What is up there now [at Spalding House]. . . . What happened was that when my grandmother died her only daughter, my Aunt Alice Spalding--Mrs. Philip Spalding--moved from her house, which was next door, into that house--into her own mother's house--and took it over and remodeled it. That is why it is all nice and light and cheery on the interior (chuckles), with big windows, and why my description of the way that I remember it doesn't match anything

of what you were conscious of at all. (chuckles)

The swimming pool was added on later, too, and the courtyard. Well, the courtyard was always there, but what is now Jim Foster's house--the curator--was added on as a library, you see, and now it is shut off completely and is a self-contained unit. And then . . .

M: And your Aunt Alice did this, what did you say, when your grandmother died?

P: When my grandmother died, yes, but my Aunt Alice was also very instrumental in helping with the construction of--well, on paper anyway--the Academy of Arts. It was partly her taste and partly my grandmother's. And then the chief architect there was this--I think his first name was Charles--Goodhue who was an architect from Chicago who came out. But that is a whole story in itself, too, and that you could get quite easily.

M: Yeh. Uh huh.

P: So anyway, then Aunt Alice lived in her mother's house. My grandmother was a very, very shy person. Well, she was one who would hide her light under a bushel and she, as in that style, would never publicize any of her gifts at all, her charitable ones. And so the garden that is there, that was done by these two Buddhist monks that were brought from Japan, was always called the Spalding Garden because the two places were adjacent to one another and this was a valley in between, although it really was hers. And that is why the house is called the Spalding House, although it is really my grandmother's house. It should be the Mrs. Charles M. Cooke House, but it's now called Spalding House.

M: Yeh. This grandmother--was she well-educated, as far as that goes?

P: Well, she went to Punahou and then from there on her education was--how would you describe it?--she educated herself, yes. Well, she traveled a great deal. They went to Europe a number of times and they went to the Orient a number of times. And also, I don't say they got more out of education, but they got a more formal education. And with that good formal background, if you wanted to you could expand; you could go into all kinds of history and all kinds of art. And don't forget that Oriental art was not known at all then. She was one of the pioneers in this.

M: Yeh, that's what kind of makes me curious is how she got on this Oriental . . .

P: Well--binge? Yes.

M: Yeh, instead of European antiques or something more that you'd expect.

P: Yes. Well, she started out with the European and collected that, and then she took a trip to Japan. Now this I get from--my informant is my own mother who had just gotten married--[1914], yes. And it was shortly after that that my grandmother came back from a trip to the Orient and brought with her what my mother thought then were these ugly little pots with brownish-greenish glaze and what have you. And my mother couldn't stand them because she was still in what I call a Dresden Period, you know.

M: Yeh.

P: Grandma got very much interested and more and more interested, and it was her own taste that developed that. Then afterwards my mother herself wised up and became interested. Again you see, my mother, with a formal education at Punahou but with a very good mind, was able to educate herself. Golly, if she'd had a good Oriental art course, which wasn't invented until after World War II anyway--I know, I speak from experience--she could have gone farther quicker, but they all went far enough through the years with experience.

M: Yeh.

#### COUNTER AT 395/1ST TAPE

Well, let's see. Maybe you could go on then with your--since we're talking about the Cooke side at the moment.

P: Is this more or less what you want?

M: Exactly what I want.

P: Oh good.

M: Yeh. Maybe you could go on with your father, his generation, and the recollections that you have.

P: Oh. Oh yes, I can do that. This will more or less amplify what you read in that little book that Scott loaned you that my Uncle Clarence [Cooke] wrote. They again were a family, my grandmother and grandfather, that had--what was it?--six sons and two daughters. My grandfather had started out--what was it?--101 pounds in weight and then they ended up with twins (Lynda laughs), which he thought was a



pretty good showing, considering. (laughter)

M: Yeh.

P: They lived a very quiet life. My grandfather--this I get from my father almost totally and I keep hearing it every day too--was very much against alcohol. He kept liquor in the house but he did not drink. He never ever did in all of his life. He had a very good sense of humor and he just didn't need any artificial stimulant. And he was against it for religious reasons too. My grandmother would take a drink now and again and, as I say, they offered it to their guests but he didn't have the cocktail hour, which is sort of too bad (chuckles) . . .

M: Yeh.

P: . . . but that's all right. But he was a great one for playing cards and they all played cards like crazy. They weren't supposed to play cards on Sunday but, as my father said, they did anyway. They just sort of retired up into the bedrooms and closed the blinds. (laughter) They were fond of games and they had a gorgeous, but slightly ridiculous sense of humor.

There's one story that does not come out in the book that I just love. That was when they were going home from church on a Sunday--this is my grandfather and my grandmother when they were newly married--and he was driving the horses and the carriage past sort of a junkyard that was full of these figureheads from the ships. And you know what most of those ladies are like: bare-bosomed and long, flowing tresses.

M: Right.

P: He insisted upon doffing his hat to them and she would say, "Charles, Charles, stop that! Stop that, Charles!" (laughter) But he had a sense of the ridiculous, which I think is as good as a sense of humor, besides a sense of humor, too. He got a great deal of fun out of life.

One thing he did to his sister which I think is incredible--to his older sister. They were in their teens then and she loved cards very much but did not like bridge and she refused to learn bridge. Bridge--I think she thought of it as a gambling game because I think contract was just beginning to come in then and the idea of bidding, you see, would lead to gambling and she was very strict. I won't tell you which one she was, but she was very strict and very moral that way and quite missionary. So he sat down one day and said, "I want to teach you a new game." "Fine." So he taught her this game and she loved

it and she played it for two months before she discovered that he had taught her bridge. (laughter) She wouldn't speak to him for a long time afterwards. Just for this innocent little thing. And Grandma had a--well, she would have to after living that long with him; he wouldn't have married her, too, if she hadn't had a nice sense of fun that way.

M: Uh huh.

P: It was a gaiety and there were jokes. And all of the sons, they were a very lively family really when it comes to that. They lived, as I say, on Beretania Street where the academy is now and then spent their summers up Luakaha where it was cooler by about five degrees (Lynda chuckles). Ten?

M: Yeh, at the most.

P: Give or take. Swam in the streams. They did a lot of hiking. It was sort of home entertainment but they all had that. We had it too. You know, that's another funny thing that got handed down. On Molokai where I spent so many of my vacations on that ranch, I think we finally got a radio there but everything else was all games after dinner, including the children. When the children, meaning me at the age of ten or thereabouts, went to bed, then they settled down and played their bridge but until then it was incorporating us. Sardines--are you familiar with the game Sardines?

M: No.

P: Well, it's a sort of hide-and-seek game which any age can play. They were active that way. Oh, you name them--Up Jenkins. Did you know Up Jenkins?

M: No. (laughs)

P: Oh dear! Misspent childhood, misspent childhood. (laughter) We had a lot of fun that way. It's gone down even through our family. In our San Juan place it was last year that we got the radio, over my dead body. You had to be able to amuse yourself; there's no TV up there.

M: I think that's wonderful.

P: Well, it's fun. You learn to read and, as I say, play. It doesn't hurt them. It throws you on your own. How can I go on about that?

The trouble is that my father was the youngest and I

was born when he was thirty-two so I was not as close to my aunts and uncles as some children are. I was very much at the end of the line.

M: Yeh, right. Do you remember any large gatherings like Halloween things and that sort of celebration?

P: Oh yes, we had the family tradition of the Thanksgiving dinner and that was over at Laie. That was a noontime thing.

M: Laie?

P: Laie, um hmm.

M: And everyone traipsed over there?

P: Oh yes, indeed, but you didn't traipse over there for the day. You went there and you spent two weeks.

M: Oh. Every Thanksgiving?

P: Well you see, there were five family houses there. My grandmother had one and four of her children did and then my father and his sister, my Aunt Alice, shared my grandmother's. We'd go over there for the whole long weekend, in that case. Oh, listen, those were the days when you had guests' servants quarters. You didn't have just beach houses.

M: Guests' servants quarters? (laughs)

P: Yes. It was something. When you put on a Thanksgiving dinner, it was a Thanksgiving dinner. My grandmother's seat was always decorated with the sugar cane fronds, which was pretty. Oh, we really went all out.

M: Oh my gosh.

P: I remember that vividly. And then Christmas we always had breakfast. And that was breakfast starting with orange juice if you were a child, and a half a grapefruit if you were an adult, and creamed turkey hash on toast and potato chips and coffee.

M: Potato chips?

P: Yes, um hmm. And that was for all of the children and the grandchildren. As I say, there were twenty-nine grandchildren.

M: And all the aunts and uncles too.

P: Oh yes. That was Christmas breakfast. We used to fuss so because, you know, you wake up in the morning and you open your Christmas presents and what do you want to do--you want to sit down and play with them. But no, we had to get dressed up and arrive at nine o'clock at my grandmother's. (chuckles)

M: Oh, I see.

P: But we went there. And then we came back, had the other side of the family for Christmas dinner, and I think all the families did the same thing.

M: What was this huge gathering at Laie? What would the dinner be like?

P: Oh, turkey and ham and mashed potatoes and green beans and cranberry jelly, pumpkin pie, mincemeat pie. No ice cream. And the celery, the olives and the little nut baskets--cut silver nut baskets with nuts in them, apple cider. It was a true New England festivity. Everybody had apple cider.

M: Was your grandmother putting this dinner on? Was that the idea?

P: Yes, but she would put it on with the help of her daughters-in-law's servants and their help too, and maybe each one of them would supply a turkey so you'd have five turkeys. Well, you need five turkeys for . . .

M: A crowd that size.

P: . . . a crowd that size, yes. And then each one had their own kitchen, but all the food was served by the servants and I think, as I recollect--I always recollected--at my oldest aunt's and uncle's [Lila and Charles M. Cooke, Jr.] house because it had the longest living room and this tremendous long table.

M: You mean you actually all sat at the same table?

P: Oh yes, at the same table.

M: All those people?

P: All those people, with possibly a cross-table at the end for the little children. When you graduated . . .

M: That must have been a sight.

P: It was. It was quite something. Well you see, I was the youngest of my generation and then the next generation down, the great-grandchildren, [one of them] is one of my closest friends and she's a year and a half younger than I am. Of course there is a generation gap which we always fight over. I keep saying I'm a generation older; now she says she's a generation younger. (Lynda laughs) A year and a half is only eighteen months. (chuckles)

We always sang the Doxology before eating. You know, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow. . . ."

M: Um hmm.

P: But that was all. We kept up the tradition of the Christmas breakfast. That went on from, oh, whoever could cope with it--whichever one of the aunts and uncles could--and then my mother was the last one to do it because she and my father were the survivors. But by that time we had degenerated--well, World War II came in between too--we had degenerated to paper plates and paper cups and you had orange juice but you still had the creamed turkey on the toast with spinach. (laughter) And you paid for it. The Thanksgiving dinners broke off. No, I remember pictures of it during World War II that my mother sent me when I was in college, so it was still going on.

M: Fantastic.

P: But after that, I would say shortly after World War II, it stopped. But you get as big a family like that and it gets too cumbersome because then you have married great-grandchildren who are producing and . . .

M: Yeh, it gets completely out of hand.

P: It does. I think the largest number that I remember were a hundred and four at one of them.

M: My gosh.

P: Because you see they didn't all live here; a lot of them were stuck on the Mainland. It was during the war too. But those were the only two times when we got together en masse and I think it was good, if I can state an opinion, because we did get to know one another.

M: Um hmm.

P: I mean, as far as the first cousins were concerned, we all

knew one another well as children, but after that I think it's impossible to keep a whole family when you get into the second cousins bracket. It's apt to spread out too far too thinly.

M: Um hmm. I think it's marvelous. My family did that for a long time and it finally got out of control.

P: Yeh.

M: It got to be sixty or so of us.

P: Well, they always counted on a minimum of eighty. I mean, that was par for the course. But I'm really sorry now when I see my first cousins once removed and I don't know their children. Some of them I don't know their husbands and wives too and I would have if this thing had been manageable; if we could've kept on.

M: Yeh.

P: But you can't.

M: No.

P: So we limit it now to my father and his children and grandchildren for Thanksgiving and for Christmas, but not Christmas breakfast. (laughter) By popular vote that got tossed out.

M: Did you have presents at your grandmother's house then, too, when you went to her house?

P: No, but that's one thing that's unique. Well, I've never heard of this before and I didn't realize how funny--and I mean funny--it sounded until I got to thinking about it. But she not only gave presents to her sons and daughters-in-law and her grandchildren--this is hard to believe--she gave presents to her sons' and daughters-in-law's servants. And I know this because I remember my mother saying that she had the hardest time getting my Japanese nurse to call up my grandmother and thank her for the kimono.

M: Oh my word.

P: And when you consider that my mother and father never had fewer than five gardeners. This was in the plummy days--the five gardeners and two maids and a chauffeur and a cook, you know. I don't think that she gave presents to the gardeners but it did go down to the actual indoor servants, however.

M: Good grief. She must have spent half a fortune on every Christmas. (laughter)

P: I imagine she did.

M: It must have taken her all year. (laughter)

P: And what a list! Well, I don't imagine she did any other work. I mean, she drew up a list and went out and got them. It was whoever her major-domo was went out and picked out the kimonos and she just wrote the cards. You know, we think of it in slightly different terms than it actually took place.

M: Right.

P: See, you're thinking of it when you're going out with a list down to Liberty House, and me too, but no.

M: Yeh. Well, I've never experienced this servants sort of . . .

P: Situation.

M: . . . living situation. You know, I have really no conception of what it's like. It's very hard to visualize.

P: Well, it had its good aspects inasmuch as they came from every single nationality. We just grew up with them, period. I try not to inject too much of myself and my philosophy in this but I try to point out the good things that did come out of it and that complete feeling of love and affection, or of dislike, depending on how your reaction was to so-and-so and why you say, "I don't like so-and-so because he's a Korean" or "I do like so-and-so because he's something else." But usually there is a racist reason. I don't know whether it's justifiable or not, but it was just our experience at the time. Well, take it or leave it.

M: Yeh, right. Did your family generally have Chinese cooks? Everyone that I've talked to seems to have preferred Chinese cooks for some reason.

P: Mostly and, well, they were better cooks. Let me put it this way: they were better at adapting themselves to a Caucasian menu than were the Japanese cooks, but the rest of your servants were usually Japanese and, oh glory, they were tyrants.

I've never been able to have servants myself because, as Scott says right out loud, I do not know how to tell

them how to do things. I could have a cleaning woman once a week but I let her clean as she chooses. I won't let her get impertinent to me or anything like that, but I was so used to being called in when it was time for me to take my bath that I looked up with utter awe at this Japanese nurse. (Lynda chuckles) She was the one who ruled the place. If she told me I wasn't to do something, I didn't do it. They were bigger than I was, they were older than I was and I'd do what they told me. So it evens out.

M: Yeh.

P: We didn't do any ordering around. Our parents may have but we didn't. We were ordered. (laughter)

M: And you had a governess you mentioned?

P: Yes, she was a charming Swiss lady.

M: Was this before you went to Punahou?

P: Oh, probably this was through Punahou, as far as that goes. She came when I was two years old and up until that time I'd had a Japanese nursemaid who was with us, I may add, right along until she went back to Japan just before World War II. She was still ordering me around. I saw her after World War II in Japan and the first thing she said was, "Miss Brenda, you're too skinny still." (Lynda laughs) Habit dies hard and I was well into my thirties then.

The Swiss nurse came when I was two. My mother had had three children in a row but she was interested. It wasn't that she lacked interest in me but when you've brought up three in succession, after six years I don't blame her for wanting to take a vacation. (chuckles) And so, although I was around all the time, it was easier to have me in the charge of somebody else to take over at dinnertime and mealtime. (loud traffic noise in background) What I loved and adored was, she later on took care of my grandparents. Do you want me to be quiet while that goes on?

M: Yeh, that's okay.

P: She didn't really take care of me except that when I was thirteen, instead of getting a babysitter, she was in the house, you see, if my parents went out for dinner. And then I was in Punahou and she was a companion more or less. And if my family went on a trip, they didn't have to worry then; you see, there was someone around. When I went away to boarding school, she moved up to my Grandmother Howatt's



place and took care of my Grandmother and Grandfather Howatt. She was a good cook and a good housekeeper for them and good company. I was devoted to her really.

M: Did she come here from Switzerland?

P: No. Oh, let's see. She lived in California for a long time. She came over to America when she was about eighteen as what would be the equivalent of a registered nurse. I don't know what you would call it in Switzerland. She was, as I say, very capable. She worked for the government out here for a long time--not too long though--sort of in the welfare department and with the mentally ill too--sort of in a general way that way--and in the state hospital. Sum it up that way.

This is going to wring your heart, but she used to tell me when she took care of this very old--I would love to say it was Rose [Otis] Tribe who was one of the great Hawaiian singers, had a beautiful voice. But now this is where Scott says I'm apt to join two stories in one, so whether it was Rose Tribe or not it was an Hawaiian singer who had a beautiful, beautiful voice and was dying of TB. This nurse's name was Kohli--K-O-H-L-I--and instead of Miss Kohli we just lovingly called her Kohli. Her first name was Marie and after we grew up she insisted we call her Marie and none of us could. (both chuckle) She was "Kohli darling," you know, as far as we were concerned. She used to drink out of the same teacup as this poor Hawaiian with the TB and finally the Hawaiian, when she knew she was dying, she said, "Miss Kohli, I have nothing to give you. All I ever had was my voice." And she proceeded to sing "Aloha 'Oe".

M: Hmm.

P: Oh, I used to cry over that. That's true. But really, that's a bit of old Hawaii for you.

M: Yeh.

P: But she was with us for all that time. People had a number of servants. And then we had a Portuguese lady who I think is still alive, as a matter of fact--lives in San Francisco--and she used to come and sew all the time because a lot of the sewing was done by hand, you know. Of course it was done by machine. Well, with four daughters in the family, can you imagine how many hems went up and down and waists went in and out?

M: Yeh. What would you do, go down to the store and buy your material and decide what you wanted and have someone make

it?

P: Yes, they made it. Well, Liberty House was good but they didn't have Carol and Mary's then. Carol and Mary [Limited] was invented when I was sixteen. Really, truly, I mean that's when it came into being. And so most of our good clothes--and I mean good clothes--were the result of our parents' trips to New York or San Francisco. The White House [department store in San Francisco] was a great place and all of our good toys came from there too. The great joy of my life was the F.A.O. Schwartz catalogue --toy catalogue. Oh, that was marvelous but you can only get so much with that. Most clothes had to be fitted.

And then with four daughters to provide sheets for. We all were married with two dozen linen sheets with our monograms on them. That kept hands busy for a long time. (chuckles)

M: Oh my gosh.

P: I know it isn't done anymore.

M: Where did that tradition come from?

P: Oh, that's just tradition-tradition. That's English and American. You started out with a trousseau.

M: Was this started in your girlhood or was it all . . .

P: Oh yes, it was started by the time I was born. By the time you're going to have two dozen hand-stitched, embroidered linen sheets, the maid has to start pretty early. (laughter) She did it during her rest hour, needless to say; sat there and sewed quietly, hand-stitched--oh, my dear--those yards and yards and yards of linen.

M: Fantastic. They must have lasted forever too.

P: Unfortunately, they lasted only fourteen years.

M: Really?

P: Um hmm.

M: You'd expect them . . .

P: Because I used them all the time, you see. Then I bought my sister Cappy's because she never liked linen, she liked cotton, so then we used up hers. Our washing machines are a lot harder on clothes and all than they used to be.

M: That's another thing you must have had was laundresses, huh?

P: Oh yes.

M: Did you have special people come in for that sort of thing?

P: Yes, there was the laundress. Well that again, you go in- to servants' quarters that were built over the garage. You had a four-car garage and it had its own gasoline pumps so you could fill the car with gasoline and there were several rooms there, you see, for the servants. And then the washing machine was on the main floor there. On rainy days you hung up the sheets in the garage--long lines of those, you see. That was great sport, to run through there with dirty hands. (laughter)

Well, I say the servants ordered us around. They would roar at us and the Chinese cook was the one that was the worst because we used to tease him and he would come out with the butcher's cleaver after us to terrify us. (laughter) We were not good. And they did not like us in the kitchen.

M: So you were sort of, I don't know . . .

P: We never learned to cook till we grew up and we were married.

M: You wouldn't, would you, because you just couldn't go in and poke in the pots and breathe down someone's neck and watch things.

P: No, and nobody wanted to teach you. Heck, they'd be out of a job if you knew how, you know. I mean, there was a practical thing behind it, besides the fact that we would get underfoot.

M: Uh huh. So you just didn't learn how to do these . . .

P: No, none of it.

M: . . . housekeeping things.

P: And, I will interject, this coming week when I go up to take care of my father while his couple go on vacation, his cook--a man--came to us when I was ten years old and that's why they don't believe that I can even boil water. (Lynda laughs) I'm still taking orders from them and here I am, what! It's an incredible situation. This year will be better because they really realize now that I know how

how to cook and can do something. (Lynda laughs) Speaking of this, it's seeing it from the other side of the coin, believe you me.

M: Did your parents encourage you. . . . You went to college and all of this.

P: Yes.

M: Did they encourage you to have a career? What sort of thing were you raised with, the idea that you would be a . . .

P: Oh yeh, we were definitely. I think all of this was done by implication. None of it, you know, was ever said out loud. I mean, you absorb so much of this. No, I think definitely that what was hoped for was that we would be married. But I think that they wanted, if possible, for us to have. . . . Well, to start out with, we started our education at Hanahauoli [School] which was a progressive grammar school. It still is, more or less, but it was considered very progressive then.

M: Let me check this (recorder) again.

END OF SIDE 2/1ST TAPE

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

P: Incidentally, if you like I can sit down with my typewriter after you leave and do a vital statistics--a born and died kind of thing--if you want.

M: Oh, that would be great, if you could.

P: Do you want me to go back as far as I can with names?

M: Yeh, if you could that'll help a lot.

P: Because it'll help you tie in a lot of this. As I say, some of them are absolutely unimportant because I know nothing about them. I've also got a whole stack of photographs and I don't know any names.

M: Oh dear.

P: Well, those you just throw out whenever you get enough oomph, you know. (Lynda laughs)

M: Right.

P: Nobody's going to recognize them. Oh, let's see. Where were we? Oh, starting out with education.

M: Yeh.

P: Do you want me to spell Hanahauoli for you?

M: No, I can. (laughs) I can negotiate that at this point.

P: I'm so used to spelling Kalakaua for people. (chuckles) Do you know what I mean?

M: Yeh.

P: Well, I went to Hanahauoli through sixth grade, having flunked kindergarten. And then Punahou--seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth grade, tenth grade. They made a general practice of sending us away so that we would not grow up with just the Islands in mind, to give us a more rounded education. So I was sent first to Katherine Branson's in California which did not agree with me, and then I went to . . .

M: I've heard about that school.

P: Yeh, you have?

M: From other people. (chuckles)

P: My generation other people?

M: Uh huh.

P: Do you know that the generation that's going there now loves and adores it?

M: Well, I talked to a girl (microphone noise), oh dear, years ago when I was pledging younger girls for my sorority.

P: Oh yes.

M: She had gone there before she came to college. She hated it.

P: Oh yes!

M: This was ten, fifteen years ago.

P: Oh yes, that was about the end of its horrible regime. You know, nobody who went there would ever go back and

visit it. They used to tell stories. I mean, you know, "Would you rather go to hell or Katherine Branson's?" "Oh, hell anyday!" (laughter) That's crude, but along those lines and that's just as crude as you can possibly be. But oh, I just detested the place and so I did very poorly there. My parents were very wise and yanked me out of it and I went to Kingswood in Detroit, and then two years at Sarah Lawrence. That was beginning 1941, so the war caught up with me and I couldn't come home, so then I went to Harvard. And then I came home.

M: You went to Harvard?

P: Yes, that was the summer of 1942. I took Japanese there.

M: As a student?

P: Yeh, just summer school. I took Japanese there. And then I went back to Sarah Lawrence and I returned to the Islands in 1943, taught school at Hanahauoli as an assistant and then started working at the Academy [of Arts].

I wanted to go back to Sarah Lawrence but I couldn't get Oriental art there. There were only two places where I could get Oriental art history. This is interesting in its own way because this shows you when Oriental art history--you could get it at Columbia or you could get it at Radcliffe [College]. I wasn't good enough to get into Radcliffe, as a scholar, but I could get into Columbia [University]. But I couldn't graduate from Columbia because I had not had Hygiene A or English A (laughter), so I took what courses I wanted at Columbia for one year and I went happily back to Sarah Lawrence, where they couldn't care less about English A or Hygiene A, and graduated. So when you talk about dropouts, I just sort of close my little mouth and keep very, very quiet.

But the idea was to send us away to become exposed to the Eastern Coast and different ways of life, and also to get used to being away from your parents because that was before they had airplanes commercially, really, so we never got home for Christmas. We came home just for summers. Well, it was good training, I think, for us; it taught us to be independent.

M: Um hmm.

P: And that was the point of that and that is pretty much the pattern of all of my contemporaries and the older ones too. One of my brothers-in-law--I guess it was twelve years before he was home for Christmas. He had four years of graduate work and four years of college and four years of boarding school. That's a long time.

M: It seems rather brutal, in fact. It does, doesn't it?

P: It does, um hmm.

M: I mean, looking at it now.

P: Well, if you're fifteen, as I was when I went away, you're beginning to get very independent. Fifteen or sixteen.

M: Well, it may be a good thing because you certainly avoid this tug of war that parents and their children go through.

P: Oh yes. No question of it. Well, there's a generation gap, one of distance and another of opinion.

M: Yeh.

P: And it isn't bad because actually we learned to appreciate Hawaii a lot more, I think, by contrast and, also, our way of life out here.

In the winters we would get together for vacations. That winter of 1941, that December, there were about twenty of us up at Mont Tremblant in [Quebec] Canada. It was a new skiing resort there. Then usually there was somebody's mother or so who would act as chaperone. We'd all just descend on some poor (chuckles) unknowing resort. Of course we all thought we could ski because we knew how to surf, you know. We had no more idea of skiing. (laughter) It was something, but we had a good time. Most of us, you see, were related to one another. We'd all grown up with one another.

We would travel back across the continent by train, then we would all come home on one of two boats. There were two what we called the college boats that came back at the beginning of the summer. Then we would depart on one of the two that left in September. So it wasn't that lonely. I mean, it wasn't as though you were going off all by yourself.

M: Yeh, right, I know what you mean. No, it really sounds very attractive actually.

P: Of course, we all wrote bitter letters home that the food was no good and we were deathly homesick, et cetera, et cetera, but I don't think we were half as miserable as we made out. (laughter)

And that's why we sent [our sons] Thane and Boyd to H.P.A. [Hawaii Preparatory Academy in Kamuela, Hawaii]. But they went in the seventh grade, which was awfully young, instead of the eleventh grade. But they could come home for weekends and they could telephone collect and

and they were a lot stronger. It has paid off because both of them have said that they have seen college children in their freshman year just completely lost because they had not had that boarding school experience. They had to meet two things instead of one.

I don't know. It doesn't work for everybody. I'm not saying it's the greatest thing on earth. There were a lot of them who couldn't take it, I do know, and they came home. And they did, who couldn't even take boarding school. They were the exception. Maybe they were just quietly brought back and went on through Punahou. It doesn't sound as though I'm very enthusiastic about Punahou. (laughter) But it didn't have the standards that it has now.

M: Uh huh. Could you go back and tell me some more about your parents [Theodore Atherton and Muriel Howatt Cooke], how they got together?

P: Oh, well, they got together through Punahou. (laughter) They were in the same class together.

M: Where all things begin and end.

P: One takes after the other. That's what they did and they grew up in a gang and they did things very much as a group. All their interests were along those lines--picnics and hiking and swimming and, of course, not the dances and all of that. It's more of what it's getting to be now, except without the going steady so much. You went out in a group. Or has the going steady--is that going out now?

M: Seems to be.

P: Yes. Well, remember when it was so strong?

M: Yeh.

P: That's what I'm trying to get away from. They were a group and although they paired off to a degree, it was more the gang. And the gang went all the way through Punahou and that was how they got together. They were married, Mother and Pa, when they were twenty-two so what happened in between, I don't know. Mother didn't get a job.

M: And you said she didn't go to college, right?

P: And she didn't go to college. I guess she just stayed home. Let's see. I graduated when I was seventeen. She



probably graduated when she was nineteen, wouldn't you think? Isn't that a more normal [age]?

M: Hmm.

P: Nowadays? Aren't they eighteen or nineteen?

M: Usually eighteen.

P: Eighteen?

M: Yeh. Seventeen or eighteen.

P: It depends upon when your birthday is, a lot of it. But I think she probably just stayed at home. My father, after Punahou--I can't quite reconcile this; I'll have to get him to explain--went to Saint Luke's Boarding School but it sounds more like a junior college. I think he had at least two years there.

M: Where was this?

P: Ah, Pennsylvania? In the East anyway. But I'll check up on that--get those facts--because they don't seem to make sense.

M: Was he more or less destined to follow in his father's footsteps?

P: My grandfather laid down the rule, except for my oldest uncle who was a born biologist and ended up as the head of the biology department at Yale. But my grandfather had a job for each one of his sons and, by golly, they did just exactly what he told them to do. How he got away with it I will never know. (Lynda laughs) He literally did this.

He decided that Clarence was going to be thus-and-such in the Bank of Hawaii and that Richard was going to be thus-and-such. Montague, who was the eldest, was the biologist. George just didn't do very well along those lines, so he went and bought Molokai Ranch and installed my Uncle George as the manager. (Lynda laughs) Theodore, who was the youngest--"All right, Theodore, you just are going to fit into the bank." And my father, I don't think he wanted to be a banker particularly. He was good at it but he retired when he was fifty. He didn't have to work anymore and he was more interested in photography and sailboat racing. He was interested but he wasn't a passionate banker or anything like that. The others were good at figures. But imagine! And that's not criticizing my grandfather. That's just the way they did things. He could afford to do it and he did it. I suppose if

they had wanted to break away they would have.

M: Yeh.

P: You know, they could have. Seems incredible now, though.

M: It sure does. These family dynasty things just don't happen anymore.

P: No. And my father to this day will say that nobody is any good because he's a rancher or because he's interested in breeding horses or because he's a painter. I know at least two of my cousins who would have made superb Hawaiian entertainers or tour guides and really had the flair for getting along with people, for showing off the islands and have done it in their spare time as good hosts and what have you; and can play the guitar and get people together. But no, this was not a gentleman's occupation, heaven forbid. You can't do anything like that.

So the one who wanted to be a real artist, and he was, lives on the Mainland. He just got out from under as quick as he could. I don't think he ever went to college. Living there still.

M: Did you feel pressure, not only in your family but in other families that were similarly situated, to sort of live up to a certain standard? To, like you say, follow in the . . .

P: Yes, very definitely. Now this is Brenda speaking, the personal opinion. But I think that there's a whole generation that I was speaking of--of my cousins and not only their cousins but those from the other islands too--who I would say were in between sixty and fifty [years old], and I call it the lost generation because they could have been just about anything they wanted and they were not allowed to. They were either put in as managers of sugar plantations or in trust companies or in banks or what I would call an office job. Does that come close enough to a job description?

M: White-collar management.

P: Yes, exactly. Exactly. Yes, that's a far better phrase than mine. But it had to be that; it could not be a creative job. Oh yes, you could lapse and be a doctor, I suppose, and that was encouraged.

M: A college professor perhaps.

P: Oh yes. But no, not really. Oh, don't you know that

lovely phrase of my father-in-law's: "Thems that can, does; them's that can't, teaches"?

M: Oh. (laughs) I've heard that before.

P: That's when I start reaching for the baseball bat or the nearest paperweight. I get so mad at him, having been a teacher most of my life. You've heard that one.

M: Yeh.

P: Well, that's the theory; the good old Yankee thought, you know. You're not really a worker if you're going to do that. What would ever have happened if somebody had gone back into the ministry, I don't know. Personally, that never ever occurred so they were never faced with that problem.

M: Isn't that strange?

P: I had never thought of it before but, really, I wonder what would have happened. But that's what, you know, the clergy--they were beginning to think they were namby-pamby. You know how the clergy's had its ups and downs in its popularity. I think it had definitely lost its popularity at that point.

M: Isn't that strange . . .

P: It is.

M: . . . when you stop to think of all of these offspring?

P: Yeh. Well, not many of the missionaries who came out were clergymen, you know. They weren't ordained. My great-grandparents--the Rices were, but not the Cookes. He was brought out as a teacher--you know, to teach the royal children--and completely as a layman. But they didn't think of themselves that way.

M: They were very religiously committed . . .

P: Oh definitely, yes.

M: . . . type of people regardless of their occupations. At least that's been my meaning of it.

P: Oh yes, very definitely. I think you had to. If you were going to be that dedicated you had to take a stand that was pretty black and white, don't you think? I mean, if you're going to commit yourself at all.

M: You had to be, it seems to me, a borderline fanatic really.

P: Oh, definitely.

M: To come this far and to the end of the world practically and bring your families.

P: Yeh. Well, I keep saying that they were the nineteenth century Peace Corps. (Lynda laughs) Not so many people think that's funny, but I do.

M: Well, really, they were much more courageous than that actually.

P: Well, they had far less backing than the Peace Corps has politically.

M: Yeh, yeh.

P: They came a lot farther, but I think they saw things in very black and white. Well, golly, if you had any self-doubts you were sunk. At least I would think you would be. You would have to operate within your sphere.

M: No wonder they rubbed people the wrong way so frequently too.

P: Oh sure. A lot of them had no tact. They were dogmatic, with the exception of my great-grandmother who was, I think, perfectly delightful. Everybody who reads her journals just falls completely in love with her. She's homely as all get out but just a perfectly marvelous person.

M: Who's this? Now this is a Rice.

P: No, this is Juliette Montague Cooke. Well now, imagine any family who had enough of a sense of humor to name their Montague daughter Juliette. (laughter) You see, there you go.

M: And she has a bunch of journals. I haven't come--oh yes, I did too.

P: Yes, in the story of Juliette Montague Cooke.

M: You'll have to pardon me if I sometimes sound like an idiot.

P: No, you're not.

M: I've got so many of these names that I'm really. . . .

P: They're all so confusing.

M: I didn't grow up here, you know, and . . .

P: No.

M: . . . so I'm learning it and it's . . .

P: I'd love to get your viewpoint, too, which would be a detached one.

M: Well, I don't really have a viewpoint solidified at this point.

P: Yes, but you've got questions which I think are very interesting and even if they're far out, I mean, ask them. They haven't been at all but, I mean, even if you want to argue that's fine by me--or disagree--because I think I'm far enough away from them anyway, and from my grandparents, to see them fairly objectively. But a lot of it, just like this other business of what would have happened --I'd never thought of it before--if one of them had wanted to go into the ministry. I don't know.

M: Yeh.

P: But it had to be, as you say, a management job or else. But you asked earlier if . . .

M: But it didn't necessarily have to be terribly--what's the word?

P: Yes, remunerative?

M: Remunerative. I mean, they didn't have to be making money hand over fist.

P: No.

M: It was more the--it had to have a certain status.

P: That's right, because in the Cooke family particularly there was an income to fall back upon--an inheritance thing.

M: Yeh.

P: Of course, if you did make money you went to the top of the class. I mean, that's great; you were even better

than you could be. (laughter) But I know that when I was talking to my father the other day I said to him right out loud, "We told our two sons anything they wanted to do--any profession as long as it was honest--we couldn't care less." I mean, we'd support them one hundred percent, which I definitely feel. But I think there are still families of my generation who, because there's been a lawyer all the way through, the son has got to be a lawyer whether he's cut out to be a nuclear physicist or he's not.

But to get back to what you were asking me about the girls--my three older sisters and myself--no, it was marriage, I think, because marriage was so important at that time. They would have been disappointed if we hadn't [gotten married]. There was no pressure but the feeling was that our happiness lay in that direction, being married and having children. But my mother who, I think, felt the lack of a college education wanted us to have the opportunity and, as a result, two of us did actually have four years of college. My oldest sister was married after her first year. My next oldest sister, although she has a very good mind, couldn't really stick with it and didn't have that much drive to stick with it and she was married almost immediately. She had about a year and a half at the most. I guess my oldest sister had two years. But my next sister whose bent was chemistry had four years. And I got mine, as you can see, in the most scattered fashion but I did get them.

M: Yeh.

P: And it came through. But that was as much prodding as we ever had. And then after that, then it became fashionable--I mean, it became more acceptable--for girls to have jobs. But they didn't have to be paying ones because I think my father felt that if you had a paying job you were taking the money away from somebody who might need it.

And there was never any question--I let my mother pick out my own major, if you can believe it, although I happily went right on reading what I wanted to read. But again, here's the family placement thing. And she picked out all of our colleges for us, not to mention our boarding schools. There was none of our picking out. But now there again, I don't know whether to--I hate to use the word blame--to lay this at my mother's door or at my door; whether I was the weak character and she was the strong one or whether this was the pattern. I suspect I was the weak character.

M: Probably mainly just that you grew up expecting that this was what parents did. That was the parents' role and the child's role was to . . .

P: Go along with it. Yes.

M: Yeh.

P: Well, we all lived at home; nobody took an apartment away. Now I wouldn't expect any child of mine after college to  
. . .

M: To be hanging around.

P: No!

M: I wouldn't want mine either. (laughter)

P: No, I couldn't stand the mess. And that's not only boys, that's girls too. It shows how times have changed.

M: Yeh.

P: But again--well, I don't know--maybe we're getting too stereotyped because, again, my great-grandmother--this Juliette Montague Cooke--went to Antioch [College in Ohio]. She was one of the first women to go to college. She happened to be there more or less at the same time that Emily Dickinson was. I'd love to stretch that one as close as I could, or try to get her as close as I could, but I can't. (laughter) Antioch being the only college that would take women at that time. But that's a long time ago.

[Mrs. Pratt undoubtedly meant to say Amherst College, where Juliette Montague Cooke "was permitted to attend lectures" while attending Miss White's school in Amherst, Massachusetts. She later attended Ipswich Seminary and became a teacher as she had wanted to be. She married Amos Starr Cooke, a teacher, in 1836 and they arrived at Honolulu on April 9, 1837. Together they educated young chiefs at the Chiefs' Children's School from 1839 to 1849.

Emily Dickinson, the famed New England poet, graduated from Amherst Academy in 1847 and attended Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, 1847-48. edKBA]

M: Yeh.

P: That's early 1800's.

M: Well, that's one of the interesting things. I think really there was a period there where women particularly sort of were eclipsed, because a lot of these missionary wives that came here, from the reading I've done, we're very strong characters.

P: Yes.

- M: And they were absolutely essential to the success of the whole thing and played a really strong role, though they couldn't really be the leaders. But they were expected to do a great deal more than just putter around the house and have babies.
- P: Yes. Well, they did all the cooking. And again, that servant business again. They did have some Hawaiian servants but they really did most of the work. Now I really think they preferred to do it, too, because they were brought up in the New England tradition of cooking and sewing and then doing everything for themselves.
- M: Yeh.
- P: I think they would have found it a lot harder than the next generation did, who were more used to a softer way of life. It was still a very religious way but a lot easier physically.
- M: Yeh, right. When you were talking about the no cards on Sundays, but people did it anyway, were you talking about your grandparents or were you talking about your parents?
- P: Oh, in that case, my grandfather laid down the rule that there were to be no cards played on Sunday, but I am sure that he turned a blind eye when my father and his brothers did, as long as they did not play cards within his sight. They were not supposed to but I think they went ahead and did it, and I think that my grandfather was broad-minded enough to realize that no harm was coming of this at all.
- M: But everyone was expected to, like, go to church on Sunday.
- P: Oh yes, they just went automatically. I know that in reading my grandfather's journals and my grandmother's, it was more of a social occasion--I hate to say so--than anything else. They were part of the choir. You know, they got together and it was the thing to do on Sunday. All right, you could walk home together as a group, you know, if you were my young grandfather, and that was how he got to know my grandmother too. She boarded at Punahou. She was born on Kauai but she boarded at Punahou. They went to church together and their friendship ripened that way. I think that they used it as such. I don't think that they were all that devout; I really truly don't. I think that at that point it was more of a holdover. The drinking, I think, he did actually feel strongly about. Why, I don't know, but it's all right.



M: Yeh.

P: In fact, lots of people do still and that's their privilege.

M: Right. When your father married your mother, was she considered of the equal status with him?

P: Oh, very definitely, um hmm. And again, that is from living out here. Well, it's quite a complex thing. You see, my father was the second generation removed from the missionaries. The missionaries didn't have either that holy aura about them of going so far back or, if you want to say, the horrible missionaries. I mean, you know, they're either looked at as black or white. It's beginning now to get a little bit gray, or a little bit more colorful, depending upon how you want to look at it. But they weren't considered that way.

And the Hawaiian royalty had many, many friends. The missionaries weren't the only haoles out here at all. That was why I brought in my great-grandfather on my mother's side because he represented, you see, the silk dresses and the brighter colors. And although he didn't have a great deal of money, he was a man of substance. I mean, he had enough and he could be friends with the royalty.

Well now, look at that Robert Louis Stevenson who went around in his pajamas all the time after all, you know, (laughter) and yet he was a great friend of King Kalakaua's. But heck, he had practically nothing, you know, when it came to money but he did have the reputation and he was a cultured person. He himself had about as much education as my great-grandfather Wall did. It was a comparable education and they came from a comparable social standing, because Stevenson certainly wasn't way up high. He's famous now because of his books but as a man he wasn't all that--a good solid Scottish family.

I think we tend to see things from our own viewpoint now instead of what they were then. It's harder to put yourself [in their place]. So in the case of my mother, yes, she was the social equal of my father's.

My father's Aunt Molly was an opera singer [known professionally as Annis Montague]. This was one of the times when they completely kicked over the traces because here was Aunt Molly, whose name was Mary [Annis Cooke], and she decided, because she had a beautiful voice, to study for the opera. Well now, here is a missionary's daughter--well, I've read the letters, the correspondence --and the fat was in the fire. Her mother, this Juliette Montague Cooke, defended her and said, "This is an honorable occupation; there is nothing that is discreditable about it." Because, you know, actresses were considered

the second lowest form of womankind, but . . .

M: Yeh. (laughs)

P: . . . she was not an actress; she was a [singer].

# END OF SIDE 1/2ND TAPE

P: Anyway, so she went and she studied in Europe. She married an absolute ne'er-do-well [Charles H. Turner] who was absolutely no good, and she had no sense of money and she was forever running into debt. She was perfectly beautiful and she charmed everybody and she sang in Australia. She formed her own opera company.

M: Oh my gosh.

P: Her favorite brother was my grandfather, Charles M. Cooke, but he would write these letters to her and say, "Oh, how can you do this to our name?" because these overdrafts would come in. And yet her mother would defend her. And my Great-Aunt Molly, one of her closest friends was my mother's mother and she used to visit her all the time.

So you see they were all good, middle-class Americans together. I mean, that was what they thought of themselves, except that they were middle-class Hawaiian citizens because they were all born middle-class Hawaiian citizens until they switched over. I don't think that they put on any real airs.

You get that--oh dear, this is a personal comment coming in--I think you get that more nowadays with all this talk about the alii and all this talk about the missionaries. It wasn't as sharply defined. With the alii, yes, because they were royalty and they were considered royalty. But heck, when you consider that Liliuokalani was educated by my own great-grandmother. She and her husband educated all those kings and queens, knew them as little children and as adolescents. And they again looked up to their teachers. Although the Cookes respected them --or did not respect them, depending on how they behaved--when they became His and Her Majesty, the respect was due to the title and to the person if they came up to the right standards. Oh dear, am I making myself clear?

M: Yeh, I know what you mean.

P: I don't know if I'm stating it too clearly. But they never tried to be anything above their own New England status which was--gentleman farmer, I suppose, is really what you would call it more than anything else.

M: Yeh.

P: And neither did Charles Wall who considered himself an architect.

M: Yeh, it's a different kind of I guess what you'd call class-consciousness or something, I think; seems to me.

P: Yes.

M: And much less dependent on outward trappings.

P: Yes.

M: Really more subtle sort of a thing, really.

P: Yes. And I think they would never--or very few of them married Hawaiians--although they preached brotherly love and all that, they wouldn't consider marrying an Hawaiian. There would still be the teacher-student relationship. But they would respect an Hawaiian of good morals and solid principles who was a good leader and if you were a king, particularly, like Kamehameha III who was superb. I mean, he was a fine statesman and all the rest of it and he would be highly respected. But if they saw, as they did with Kamehameha IV who, you know, was so bitter about them that he became an Episcopalian and just threw out the Congregationalists. . . .

M: Yeh.

P: And that was how the Episcopalians came out here. But they deplored the fact that he went so overboard with his admiration of [Queen] Victoria and all the satins and the silks and the pomp and the ceremony. They wanted, if possible, to keep away from that but they weren't too outspoken on the subject. They were really more concerned with the moral effect of opium being brought in and that kind of thing which they really deplored. They were worried that these Hawaiian rulers were not strong enough to carry the country through which, as it turned out, they weren't. And it was too bad. They'd done the best they could but, unfortunately, they couldn't do it.

M: Yeh, right. I don't . . .

P: And they had enough sense not to become involved with the court. It wouldn't have been the right thing. I think you can get . . .

M: You mean with the political intrigues and so forth.

P: Yes, yes. They were wiser in staying aloof from it and being quieter.

M: I think they would have really nullified their . . .

P: Their efforts, yes.

M: . . . good effects if they had.

P: The only one who did it, and he did it successfully, was Gerrit Judd.

M: Um hmm.

P: But you don't see much of Mrs. Judd at the parties and you don't see much of him. You see him talking from a business standpoint and being called into counsels. And there was a strong friendship but, as I say, it was a teacher-student relationship, a friendship that way. It's interesting.

One of the things that I think people tend to forget, too, is the time element. One night I couldn't sleep and I was trying to work out ages and I actually remember, as a small child, meeting my grandfather's Hawaiian nurse. Now I must have been about four at the time and she was well into her hundreds. I was doing this as an intellectual arithmetic exercise because I couldn't get to sleep. I was using certain dates and approximate ages and working this out. And I figured that she must have been about a hundred and two [years old] when I met her. I do remember her at the meeting too. Oh, it was horrible. She was practically skin and bones, you know, with her skin just hanging on her arms. She was weeping all over me because I was--my grandfather was the youngest so I was the baby's baby's baby. You see, she was following all this down.

M: Yeh. Oh, what a shock it must have been.

P: Oh, it was frightening.

M: Really affected you, kind of.

P: Oh yes. It was a frightening thing. She came to work for my great-grandparents when she must have been about twelve to fourteen years old.

M: Amos [Starr] and Juliette [Montague Cooke]?

P: Yes, so you see that there is a hundred-year span.

M: Oh my gosh! That's fantastic.

P: Although I can remember it. This business of memory is a funny thing. Now this is where your time collapses, or telescopes rather--contracts in, yet we think of that as so long ago when they came out here, which was 1832 [1837].

M: How did she happen to be meeting you?

P: Oh, she came to visit my mother and father and she wanted to see my . . .

M: She was still getting about?

P: Oh, somebody must have driven her out. But you see, I was so little I don't remember. I just remember standing in the living room and meeting this dreadfully old woman who just, as I say, frightened me silly. Her name was Ka'aina and when my grandfather was born she ran across to the [Iolani] Palace to get whoever was the monarch then--I guess it was Kamehameha III--for a Hawaiian name for my grandfather. Some such story like that. I mean, she was just a young girl. Now there I can't pinpoint that one. But if you actually work it out--of course, she's dead how many years, because it's a long time since I was three or four years old, but even so, memory carries on. This is the sort of thing that I find fascinating.

M: Were there other Hawaiians that sort of interwove with your family that you remember?

P: I myself remember actually--well no, it's too up-to-date--David Kahanamoku, Duke's youngest brother, who practically brought me up. He was the one who taught me to surf and to really swim--to swim well--and to pick out the different kinds of seaweeds while we were waiting for waves way out there on the surfboard. He would tell me to swim out so I would swim out, heading toward the horizon, turn around and come back. Then he would send me diving down to bring up the seaweed. He taught me a lot of that. And actually, it was a very sentimental thing but when Boyd was born I told Scott, I said, "I want to give Boyd to David as a godchild because he meant so much to me as a young child."

M: How did you happen to know him?

P: Well, through my mother. His wife was from Boston. Now this again you can quote or not quote; I'd go a little easy. She had red hair and blue eyes and Celtic skin, and her family disowned her when she married. She came out here on a visit and she married David. He was a very dark Hawaiian and a very, very fine--basically very fine--

person, not an intellectual at all.

M: This is Duke's younger brother.

P: Yes, one of his younger brothers. He was a beachboy but a beachboy meant something else in those days; it didn't have the connotation it has now. She fell in love with him and married him and they never had any children. It's amazing, very few of the Kahanamokus ever did. Sargent, as far as I know, is the only one. She was a contemporary of my mother's--well, so was David as far as that goes, my mother and father--and she was a very good friend of my mother's. They were interested in music and art together. Whether she ever regretted the marriage or not, she would never say or anything like that. I think she missed certain things which she couldn't share with him, such as the arts and music.

But that was how the friendship grew and David was particularly good to me as far as that goes. I guess I came along at the right time. My older sisters were sailing and I liked the swimming and he just taught me an awful lot of it.

M: Right out here?

P: Yes, right out there. I couldn't do it now (laughter), but I could once. Those boards have gotten heavier and heavier and heavier. It's all water-logged, I'm sure.

But he was in his own way a very, very fine person. I'll never forget what he taught me actually--well, swimming and all the rest, but about psychology in water. It actually saved a life, if not two, and that in it's own way is sort of fascinating. He was very good, particularly during World War II, at taking groups out in canoes--the soldiers--and in directing volleyball games and that kind of thing. I mean, particularly in this canoe business, whether the tourists could swim or not.

We'd spend hours out there waiting for a wave, the two of us on one surfboard, and when we caught it--I was just a little girl--he'd be standing there holding onto my shoulders and there'd be an inch of water between me and the surfboard. Here I was, so-called standing up straight. (laughter) He was so strong.

He talked an awful lot and he said, "Brenda, when the canoe tips over, this is what I do" and he was laughing about it. He said, "I give everybody a job. It does two things. I tell the ladies to hang onto the paddles and that keeps the paddles [from drifting away] and it gives the ladies something to think about." They forget they don't know how to swim, you know, and they're hanging onto a paddle so they're still afloat. And then he said, "I

give the men who are energetic more to do." And he said, "And the one thing I do is I keep talking and I keep talking and I stay between them and the ocean."

For some reason or other this all sort of fell into the right place. Years and years later we were on Molokai out with the Ralph Mortons. Were you here then when he was head of Hawaiian Trust Company?

M: No.

P: Well, it was before Scott was. He was sent out to pick out his successor. We took them up to Molokai for a week-end. His son and his son's bride were up there too with us. They're ten years younger than we are. We took them down to this beach. Molokai has peculiar coves. There's no breakwater so if you swim beyond the cove itself you get caught in this current and you're sunk. The thing to do is to relax until you can float in. I've never done it--very fortunate. I've had enough sense to stay in. Also they're subject to undertow.

Well, I didn't realize that this young girl--she was in her early twenties and she was not a strong swimmer. She and her husband and I went in swimming and Scott walked out parallel to us along the lava flow. The older Mortons stayed to sun on the beach. I realized that the undertow had gotten us and it was taking us out and Scott sort of waved at me. This was the western end of Molokai and the nearest thing was the LORAN Station [Long Range Navigation Station]. I thought very happily, "Well, the LORAN Station--they'll have a boat there. And if worst comes to worst, I'll hold"--her name was Robin--"Robin's chin up and it's all right, we can float." It was a fairly smooth day.

But I remembered David and I said, "You know, Robin, I'm getting a little tired. Shall we go in?" and she said, "Yeh, let's go in." So we started swimming and I did what he said. I got between her and the ocean and I said, "Robin, I'm holding onto you." I got her above the hips, well above the waist, and I said, "Now I'll kick and you kick and maybe the waves are a little bit strong here but we'll get in." I kept talking the whole time. I said, "See, we've gotten past this point. See, we've gotten this far. Oh, don't worry about not going past this point. It's a little bit hard right here." (chuckles) I just kept on and on and on and I got them in. And here poor Scott was, just nearly out of his mind because he could tell what was going on. They ran gaily up the beach and I lay on that beach and it was twenty minutes before I could get up off the sand, I was so exhausted. (laughs)

M: Oh, I can imagine.

P: And I found out about a year afterwards. I was telling my sister this ridiculous thing and she said, "Brenda, there is no boat at the LORAN Station." (chuckles)

M: Oh my gosh.

P: I really don't know what would have happened but it was lucky and it was the right thing to do. It kept her distracted and she knew that there was somebody between her and the horizon and we made it in all right. But I'll never forget that one.

M: And she didn't panic.

P: No, she didn't.

M: That was the thing that probably saved the whole show.

P: I think so, because then you have to think.

M: Oh, but you must have been exhausted.

P: I was! (laughter)

M: I can't swim that strongly to hold anybody up, I don't think, in an undertow.

P: Well, I knew if we got past a certain point we were all right and we just had to make the effort, otherwise you'd just let yourself go. We'd be pulled out, which is all right. I mean, as long as you don't panic then you're okay; just swim down the coast and go in. But I didn't know how I was going to do that with someone who was not that strong [a swimmer]. And her husband couldn't help that much. I don't think that he knew it till afterwards. We didn't tell the senior Mortons. Nobody ever said anything really about it until quite some time afterwards. (laughter) She realized what had happened. Nobody wanted to talk about it; it was too close. But it never should have happened. I mean those things, you should never let them happen, I think.

M: Yeh.

P: Oh, let's stop for a few minutes, can we?

M: Yeh, you must be . . .

P: I sort of flunk out. (Lynda laughs) (counter at 266)



## END OF INTERVIEW

Re-transcribed and edited by Linda I. L. Tubbs

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Amos Starr Cooke  
(1810-1887)

m. 1836

Juliette Montague  
(1812-1896)

Charles Montague  
Cooke (1849-1909)

m. 4/24/1874

Theodore Atherton  
Cooke (1891- )

m. 5/19/1914

William Harrison Rice  
(1813-1862)

m.

Mary Sophia Hyde

Anna Charlotte Rice  
(1853-1934)

The Honorable  
Cornelius Howatt

m.

Jane Bell

James Pope C. Howatt  
(1860-1951)

m. 6/3/1890

Muriel Elizabeth  
Howatt (1891-1969)

Charles John Wall  
(1827-1884)

m. 1854

Elizabeth Evans Millar  
(1837-1923)

Emily Adelaide Wall  
(1860-1943)

Children of Theodore Atherton and Muriel Howatt Cooke:

Elizabeth Cooke m. Arthur Hyde Rice, Jr.

Mary Theodora Cooke m. Harold Dillingham, Jr.

Catherine Cooke m. Richard L. Summers

Brenda Cooke m. John Scott Boyd Pratt, III

## Subject Index

- 1    Howatt-Wall-Cooke family background  
     Muriel Elizabeth Wall Howatt Cooke  
     Emily Adelaide Wall Howatt  
     Charles John Wall, Iolani Palace architect  
     The Ward family; Dr. Gerrit P. Judd
- 2    Revolution of 1893  
     The Wall family
- 3    Howatt family history  
     James Pope Coleridge Howatt  
     James Howatt of Lockerbie, Scotland  
     Cornelius and Jane Bell Howatt  
     Scottish poet Robert Burns and the Howatts
- 4    Emily Wall Howatt's talents  
     Anecdote: the poor Howatt ancestor  
     James Pope Howatt's employment
- 5    James Pope and Emily Wall Howatt  
     Theodore Atherton and Muriel Howatt Cooke
- 6    Alexander S. (Pug) Atherton
- 7    Anecdote: Emily Wall's marriage licence  
     James Pope Coleridge Howatt
- 8    Anecdote: Brenda Cooke's christening
- 9    Charles Montague and Anna Rice Cooke  
     Honolulu Academy of Arts; Spalding House

- 9 Charles M. Cooke home in Makiki Heights  
The Theodore A. Cooke home in Nuuanu  
Oahu Country Club  
Anecdote: Country Club Road
- 19 Page Anderson  
The James Pope Howatts  
Marvel Hart  
Anna Rice Cooke
- 11 Early architectural styles of residences  
Anna Rice Cooke's home and interests
- 12 Anecdote: Anna Rice Cooke's Oriental rugs  
Honolulu Academy of Arts, 1927  
Spalding House in Makiki Heights  
Alice Cooke (Mrs. Philip E.) Spalding
- 13 James Foster, Spalding House curator  
Charles Goodhue, architect  
Spalding Garden  
Anna Rice Cooke's education; interests
- 14 Anna Rice Cooke's Oriental collection  
Cooke family history  
Clarence Hyde Cooke
- 15 The Charles M. Cooke's lifestyle  
Anecdote: C.M. Cooke and the figureheads

- 15 Anecdote: C.M. Cooke and the bridge game
- 16 Childhood entertainment
  - Vacations on Molokai
- 17 The Cooke family's holiday traditions
- 18 Mr. and Mrs. Charles M. Cooke, Jr.
- 19 The modernization of holiday traditions
- 20 Anna Rice Cooke's Christmas gift list
  - The Theodore A. Cookes' household
- 21 The servant situation
- 22 Miss Kohli, the Swiss governess
  - Brenda Cooke's Japanese nursemaid
- 23 Anecdote: Rose Otis Tribe and Miss Kohli
  - Dressmaking and ready-made clothes
- 24 Liberty House; Carol and Mary
  - The White House, San Francisco
  - F.A.O. Schwartz's catalogue
  - The Cooke girls' trousseaus
- 25 The Cookes' multi-purpose garage
  - Growing up with servants
- 26 The Cooke family's educational plans
  - The progressive Hanahauoli School
- 27 Mrs. Pratt's education
- 28 Anecdote: Katherine Branson's School

- 28    Anecdote: Oriental art history courses  
      Mrs. Pratt's early employment  
      Adolescent training concepts; practices
- 29    Island students on the Mainland;  
      Winter vacations; modes of travel  
      Thane and Boyd Pratt
- 30    Mrs. Pratt's views on boarding schools  
      Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Atherton Cooke
- 31    Theodore A. Cooke's education; employment  
      Charles M. Cooke and his sons careers  
      Clarence H. and Richard A. Cooke  
      C. Montague and George P. Cooke  
      T.A. Cooke's interests and attitudes
- 32    Occupations for a gentleman  
      Standards of living and employment
- 33    The ministry as an occupation  
      The Rices and the Cookes
- 34    The dedication of the missionaries  
      Juliette Montague Cooke
- 35    Choosing suitable employment
- 36    The importance of marriage as a career  
      Education of the T.A. Cookes' daughters  
      The roles of parents and children

- 37    Family life then and now compared  
      Juliette Montague Cooke's education  
      Emily Dickinson, New England poet  
      The role of missionary wives
- 38    The New England family tradition  
      Religious practices of the C.M. Cookes  
      Social aspects of church-going
- 39    The missionaries in Hawaii  
      Robert Louis Stevenson; King Kalakaua  
      Mary Annis Cooke Turner; opera singer  
      Juliette Montague Cooke
- 40    Charles H. Turner; Charles M. Cooke  
      Social classes during the monarchy  
      The alii and the missionaries  
      Amos Starr and Juliette Montague Cooke;  
      Teachers of Hawaiian royalty  
      Liliuokalani
- 41    The teacher-student relationship  
      Kamehameha III; Kamehameha IV  
      Queen Victoria's influence in Hawaii  
      The missionary-alii relationship
- 42    Dr. and Mrs. Gerrit Parmele Judd  
      Anecdote: C.M. Cooke's Hawaiian nurse

- 42 Amos Starr and Juliette Montague Cooke
- 43 C.M. Cooke's nurse, Ka'aina  
David and Duke Kahanamoku; Boyd Pratt  
David Kahanamoku's marriage
- 44 Sargent Kahanamoku  
David Kahanamoku's talents  
Anecdote: surfing with David Kahanamoku  
David Kahanamoku's natatorial psychology
- 45 Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Morton  
John Scott Boyd Pratt, III  
Anecdote: swimming rescue off Molokai  
Robin Morton  
Long Range Navigation Station, Molokai
- 46 Brenda Pratt's natatorial psychology
- 48 Genealogy



## THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

In May 1971, the Watumull Foundation initiated an Oral History Project.

The project was formally begun on June 24, 1971 when Katherine B. Allen was selected to interview kamaainas and longtime residents of Hawaii in order to preserve their experiences and knowledge. In July, Lynda Mair joined the staff as an interviewer.

During the next seventeen months, eighty-eight persons were interviewed. Most of these taped oral histories were transcribed by November 30, 1972.

Then the project was suspended indefinitely due to the retirement of the foundation's chairman, Ellen Jensen Watumull.

In February 1979, the project was reactivated and Miss Allen was recalled as director and editor.

Three sets of the final transcripts, typed on acid-free Permalife Bond paper, have been deposited respectively in the Archives of Hawaii, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii, and the Cooke Library at Punahou School.